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ABSTRACT

One teacher researcher recently completed a Ph.D. in education through "practitioner" research; that is, research in her own classroom. This research examined the talk that unfolded between young adolescent students in the course of everyday classroom activities in her English and Pastoral Care classrooms and in the Technology Studies classroom of a colleague teaching the same students. The study focused on hearing students as they talked in groups. It focused particularly on one student to show what may be gained from the close examination of talk between peers, and the further insights generated when the talk is compared with student-teacher talk and with what a situated researcher may have heard on other occasions. Having collected the data "on the inside," the teacher researcher examined it "from the outside," using an ethnomethodological perspective and techniques of conversation analysis to hear her students in new ways. This paper explains how the teacher researcher designed her doctoral research in relation to the tensions she experienced as a teacher conducting research in her own classroom. The paper points out that the dilemmas she faced were practical, ethical, and methodological, and that her solutions were based partly on her prior experiences conducting classroom-based research and partly on solutions generated by other teachers carrying out research in their classrooms. It states that resolving these dilemmas showed her a way in which teacher researchers might draw on their "inside" perspectives without losing the rigor and clarity of thought that can be gained from the application of particular theoretical perspectives and methodological techniques. (Contains 60 references.) (NKA)

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Teacher research: a new way of hearing adolescent student talk in class

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Paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education conference, Fremantle, Western Australia, December 2-6, 2001.

Introduction

I have been involved as a teacher in collaborative, classroom-based research for over twenty years. Early in my career I participated in action research on responsive assessment practices in writing programs and later became involved in school action research projects based on the 'language across the curriculum' programs flourishing in South Australia through the work of Garth Boomer . As a curriculum project officer, I conducted research as a participant observer in other teachers' classrooms, adding to my postgraduate qualifications and contributing to collaborative curriculum development in literacy. Recently, I completed a PhD in education through 'practitioner' research; that is, research in my own classroom. This research examined the talk that unfolded between young adolescent students in the course of everyday classroom activities in my English and Pastoral Care classrooms and in the Technology Studies classroom of a colleague who was teaching the same students. Having collected the data 'on the inside' I sought to examine it 'from the outside', using an ethnomethodological perspective and techniques of Conversation Analysis to hear my students in new ways.

In this paper I explain how I designed my doctoral research in relation to the tensions I experienced as a teacher conducting research in my own classroom. The dilemmas I faced were practical, ethical and methodological and my solutions were based partly on my prior experiences conducting classroom-based research and partly on the solutions generated by other teachers carrying out research in their classrooms. Resolving these dilemmas showed me a way in which teacher-researchers might draw on their 'inside' perspectives without losing the rigor and clarity of insight that can be gained from the application of particular theoretical perspectives and methodological techniques.

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Teacher research: a 'way of knowing'

Teacher research has been defined as 'systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers, [that] makes accessible some of the expertise of teachers and provides unique perspectives on teaching and learning'. This is a very broad definition emphasising the need for teacher research to be 'systematic' and suggesting the potential of teacher research to productively use the situated perspectives teachers bring to classroom teaching and learning. It is also broad in that it does not attempt to discriminate between the different forms of teacher research, only one of which is the kind of empirical study I conducted. What I experienced in my role as a teacher-researcher was a tension between my situated and subjective perspective, and my desire to conduct 'systematic' research, which for me implied certain standards of methodological order, rigor and detachment. My concern was that I would be so close to the situation I was observing that I would hear only what I wanted to hear.

The most prominent claim made by Cochran-Smith and Lytle for the efficacy of teacher research is an epistemological claim. They suggest that teacher research is a 'new genre', capable of creating different kinds of knowledge for and about teaching. Their argument is that teachers have a particular body of professional knowledge and expertise that constitutes a different and distinctive 'way of knowing' and generates knowledge about much more than 'how or when or where to do things'. The emphasis of this claim is on *knowing*; that is, on the knowledge teachers are supposedly able to generate because they are in a unique position to understand teaching and learning. It is on this premise that Cochran-Smith and Lytle make a distinction between 'teacher research' and 'research on teaching'. They challenge hegemonic relations between 'outside' professional researchers and 'inside' teacher researchers in efforts to establish a legitimate role for teachers in the construction of knowledge about teaching. The main questions they ask are about knowledge ('knowing') and power, about *what* can be known and *who* has the authority to know, when most educational research is carried out *on* teachers, not *by* them.

The claim that teachers can generate a qualitatively different kind of knowledge has been strongly contested but it was not this debate that was most relevant for me when I began my research. Initially, my concern was that if teachers possess different 'ways of knowing', it is the *ways* we go about knowing that may be unique. I wondered *how* I could go about conducting an intensive empirical study and teach at the same time. I also queried whether my position inside the classroom would allow me to practise *ways* of researching that outside researchers might find difficult. On the other hand, I was also aware how much I still had to learn about the way 'professional' researchers practised their work.

Research by teachers is 'work done in the interstices' of our daily lives. It is not easily fitted into a classroom schedule where there are certain constraints on teachers, such as lack of time and institutional support and restricted access to

research information and educational journals. In addition, teachers are extremely close to the research situation when we study our own classrooms and we lack an 'institutionalised audience' for our reflections. What happens if we are so close that we succumb to 'preconceptions, distortions, and self-delusions' because there is no one around to 'see the strings being pulled'? (Huberman 1996, p. 132). As argued, teachers may rely on their insider knowledge so much that they unthinkingly reject academic theories and analytic research practices, and with them the insights that can be borrowed from 'outside' perspectives. The overwhelming question for me, therefore, was what methods I might use to make students' talk, which had surrounded me daily for most of my teaching life, 'strange and interesting' .

Other teacher-researchers working in literacy classrooms have experienced, and negotiated, these same tensions. In particular, some researchers who have appreciated what can be gathered from a situated perspective, have returned to the classroom to investigate life inside. Gallas (1994, p. 5) observed her young students' communication practices in talk, writing, art, song and dance and used ethnographic techniques of observation to collect children's memorabilia in ways she acknowledged were 'unsystematic, or even random'. From the vast amount of data collected she wrote interpretive and personal descriptions of classroom events. Lensmire (1994) also returned to the classroom, entering another teacher's third grade classroom and teaching workshop approaches to writing for a set period each day. He took field notes, collected planning documents and recorded audio tapes of childrens' talk, using them to chart his own changing perceptions of writing workshop approaches. For Lensmire and Gallas, teaching and research intertwined and were conducted simultaneously in the manner of action research.

This approach differed significantly from that taken by Courtney Cazden, who also returned to a primary classroom to conduct research. However, she asked Hugh Mehan to be an external observer, to 'be there looking over her shoulder' (p 1), to provide order where she might see only chaos. Data was collected through audio tapes of teacher-student talk, with the resulting detailed analysis of teacher-student discourse identifying what has become recognised as the 'default' pattern in teacher-student conversation; that of teacher initiation, followed by student response, followed by teacher evaluation (IRE).

While these researchers chose to return to the classroom, others have found it necessary to leave it. For example, Finders had to shed her teacher identity to take up a different insider position, this time in a culture outside of the classroom. She decided she had spent too long at the front of the classroom and needed to 'move to the back'. She went to another school as a researcher and observed the 'literate underlife' (p. 24) of the young adolescent girls she wanted to study. In this manner she was able to hear how students challenged school-sanctioned literacies in their peer cultures in ways she may not have been privileged to hear as a teacher.

Taken together, these studies suggest that the 'inside/outside' opposition does not just position teacher-researchers as different from external researchers. It also captures how teachers may position themselves both inside and outside their classrooms in the ways they conduct research and apply particular theoretical and methodological frameworks to their investigations.

The practical implications of research in my own classroom

There were practical implications of conducting research in my own classroom. I wanted to hear how students talked with each other in class, when their conversations were not constrained or orchestrated by a teacher. When Barnes and Todd conducted their early and very influential study of small group talk, they entered the classroom as external researchers, selecting particular activities to record and withdrawing students from class to work in groups. I did not want to concentrate attention on certain students in this manner and I did not want their conversations constrained by having them occur in highly contrived contexts. I wanted to capture talk that unfolded during everyday classroom activity, in circumstances as 'ordinary' as possible, but I also needed a systematic method of observation that did not rely on my immediate and situated impressions. The tape recorder could become the observer looking 'over my shoulder' but I needed to make it an unobtrusive observer.

From my involvement in research projects and my experience as a teacher, I have learned it is possible to tape students regularly until they are so familiar with the recording equipment that they cease to find it distracting. While students never completely escape the sense of surveillance imposed by recording equipment, if they are in the habit of being recorded, a small portable recorder can be less disruptive than an observer, particularly an authoritative observer such as a teacher. To establish this familiarity, I taped my students for curriculum and assessment purposes from the beginning of the year, until recording for research began eight months later. By that time students were so used to being taped, that before group work they would collect a recorder from my desk, set it going at the beginning of their group discussion and return it to me at the end of the lesson, often still running. Sometimes they would stay in the classroom and at other times they would go to vacant rooms or outside on the school lawns. There were also occasions when I would set the recorders down in different parts of the room during a whole class lesson, to capture the talk that would spontaneously arise between students as they worked. The recorders became 'flies on the wall', noticed but not troublesome enough to constrain the talk. Eventually, this established recording as an expected part of the classroom procedures.

Recording talk solved another problem, which was also an ethical dilemma for me. I wanted to hear talk between the students when a teacher was not involved directly in the conversation. To observe groups as they talked would have meant I could only be with one group of students at a time. I would not be available to other students who asked for help and I would not be able to move freely around

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the class without interrupting the continuity of my observations. Yet my primary responsibility was to teach my students and I did not want the research to interfere with that responsibility. Recording left me free to teach. In addition, while I could not be in three or more places at once, a recorder could be and this made it possible to record simultaneously occurring conversations in different parts of the room. The recorders could do more effectively what I attempted to do when I moved between groups.

The decision to confine data collection to recording talk raised the issue of how I could analyse the fifty or so hours of talk on the tapes. For teacher-researchers, the task of transcribing recorded tapes is onerous. In research on classroom talk, teachers have often resorted to observing groups rather than recording the talk and when talk has been recorded, teachers have found it easier to listen and make reflective responses than to conduct systematic analyses. My aim was to rigorously analyse the tapes, so detailed transcription was essential, regardless of the time and effort it would require. Fortunately, I was awarded a full time scholarship, which made it possible for me to undertake the tedious processes involved in full transcription. What remained was the question of how to analyse the talk, how to hear my students in new, 'strange' and 'interesting' ways.

A new way of hearing students: ethnomethodology as theory and method

Studies of classroom talk differ in the way talk is coded and categorised (Edwards & Westgate 1994. In descriptive approaches, pre-determined categorisations may be applied in ways that describe 'what is the world' for speakers, rather than what 'counts as the world' for them (Heyman 1983, p. 23). An alternative 'ethnomethodological' approach is to describe the social world by attending to how people themselves describe their activities. That is, analysis is grounded in what can be shown to be relevant *for the participants*, rather than what might appear to be 'loomingly relevant' for the analyst. Such an 'analytic mentality' enables analysts to build 'nonintuitive descriptions of the organisation of conversational interaction as the technical accomplishment of member conversationalists'. Ethnomethodology and its associated techniques of Conversation Analysis provided a way for me to take up a 'nonintuitive' stance towards my data, hearing not what I thought was significant in the talk of my students, but what could be shown to be relevant for them in the sequential organisation of their conversations.

Conversation Analysis is built on the assumption that all utterances in a conversation are contextually oriented. That is, the meaning of a particular utterance cannot be understood by others without reference to its location in a sequence of utterances, without attending to what has been said before and what may reasonably be expected to be said in reply. Speakers have a range of procedures for making sense of a conversation – procedures that rely on more than the literal meaning of the words spoken - and analysts may appeal to those same sense-making procedures in order to understand the work that utterances

accomplish in an interaction. Using Conversation Analysis enabled me to focus attention on

- the *sequential* order of talk, that is, how turns were constructed and allocated on a turn-by-turn basis, and
- the *inferential* order of talk, which is how the students made certain identities and social relationships relevant through the design of turns and their use of particular categorisations .

Studies in an ethnomethodological tradition have tended to focus on teacher-student talk, in particular the talk that occurs around classroom texts in literacy classrooms. Such studies have demonstrated how dialogue constitutes a site for the organisation of authority relations around what 'counts' as knowledge and competence in school literacy practices. There have been relatively few studies in which techniques of Conversation Analysis have been used to investigate student talk with their peers. Danby's study of the interactions of pre-school children in play is a notable exception, and her turn-by-turn analysis of their talk during play is an example of how such close analysis can show the ways 'members' organise their everyday worlds. Similarly, close analysis of talk enabled me to examine the work these adolescent students did in order to organise their everyday worlds in school according to what counted for them as legitimate ways of doing the job of *being* a student.

Having conducted sustained and close examination of the talk from a rigorously pursued 'nonintuitive' perspective, I could then re-insert myself as their teacher into the way I was hearing the talk. As I completed each stage of the analysis I realised I was not hearing students solely as *speakers* in a collective and general sense, but also as individuals who brought with them particular social and educational histories that I knew something about, as both their teacher and as a long-term member of their community. I began to use this knowledge then, not to change the analysis, but to think differently about the insights I had gained through the analysis and to use those insights to re-conceptualise the social and institutional 'life' of this middle school classroom.

Hearing one student in a new way

The study focused on hearing students as they talked in groups. The initial analysis was conducted firstly on transcripts of single tasks, which provided for close, sustained and iterative analysis of long periods of talk, and secondly on transcripts of tasks where different students were working on a set activity, which allowed me to undertake a comparative analysis of the talk across groups. However during the analysis, I became aware that there were some students whose voices were heard more than others across the entire collection of tapes, suggesting there were several students who could be the subjects of individual case studies. I selected Joel as a case study because what I heard made me realise I had never really listened to him and I had failed to appreciate the 'job he did on

himself' (Sacks 1995a, p. 216) to be a student, as well as a friend and member of his peer group.

Joel's voice was heard on many of the tapes collected. Sometimes he was speaking 'legitimately' in his own group and at other times his voice was overheard on another group's recording. His voice seemed to rise above others with a persistence that could not help but be noticed. I have chosen to present selected examples of conversations involving Joel because they demonstrate how it is possible to hear a student in a new way and how this way of hearing provides insights into the continuous and creative effort that goes into the work of being a student. Hearing Joel allowed me to appreciate the extent to which he used conversation with both peers and teachers to speak his way into the classroom and into his peer group culture. For Joel, participating in group talk was one way he could continuously negotiate his social position in the classroom. In the examples that follow, he is heard talking in a Technology Studies lesson, mainly with his peers in his work group, but also with his teacher.

Taking turns

The first extract is of talk in the Technology Studies classroom, where students were recorded evaluating the design of toy cars in preparation for designing and building their own wooden toys. Joel was working with his best friend Karl, and another student Aaron, who was not a close friend of Joel's but who did work with him frequently in class. The students had been given a list of questions to consider and in the lesson that followed they were asked to present their answers to the rest of the class. The questions were:

1. Describe the toy and what it does.
2. What is it made from?
3. How are the components held together?
4. In your opinion is this a good toy for children to play with? Give reasons.
5. Have you gained any ideas from this toy that could be used on your own toy?

At the beginning of the task, Joel picked up one of the toys and exclaimed that it was broken.

Extract 1

9 Joel Oh you beauty! You ripper!

((in response to one of the toys they are given))

10 It's got a broken axle. Broken axle.

11 Karl Alright. Let's start.

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12 Joel You know this this friend of ours

13 this friend of ours had a car accident

14 and he got ( ) and a star dropper got caught

15 on the tail shaft/ of his car/

16 ? Yeah.

17 Joel The wire was wrapped around it heaps

18 and he went in this massive ditch,

((several car noises follow))

The toy's broken axle gave Joel a topic for a story. Stories are a way for students to insert their knowledge and experience into the classroom and they are often social gestures in the way they help speakers connect with their listeners. In addition, Sacks (1995a, p. 771) proposed that 'storytelling is an interactional business' between speakers, in which the telling of a story accomplishes particular social action. Hearing Joel's stories in this way makes it possible to avoid assigning intentions to him as a storyteller and examining instead the action accomplished by the telling of this story.

Sacks distinguishes between conversations in which people have restricted rights to talk to each other - such as a child talking to an adult, or a student to a teacher - and conversations where speakers do not have restricted rights, such as one student to another. Between people with relatively 'equal' interactional rights (relative because it is unusual for completely symmetrical relations to exist between speakers) stories are usually announced with a preface that warns listeners the speaker will be taking an extended turn. The turn-by-turn nature of a conversation will then generally be suspended until the story has ended. Stories are therefore one way speakers may control the floor for an extended length of time.

With this in mind, Joel's story can be examined for the work it does in this interaction. To begin with, Joel exclaims with enthusiasm that one of the toys is broken (line 10) but the other boys do not respond. Karl says 'let's start' and Joel does not reply but instead begins to tell his story - 'you know this this friend of ours this friend of ours had a car accident'. At this stage, with at least one member of the group attempting to get work underway, Joel could easily lose the floor. Instead, he draws his listeners into interactive compliance with 'you know' and then quickly inserts the 'tellable item' of the story into the preface, which is that he had a friend who had a car accident. Having given the tellable item, Joel then has the floor for an extended series of utterances, during which he is not

interrupted. Being granted a long turn means he has the time to make the connection with the broken toy and justify telling his story – 'a star dropper got caught on the tail shaft of his car'. A one word 'continuer' from one of his listeners ('yeah') gives him the opportunity to further embellish his story. The wire was wrapped around 'heaps' and the car went into a 'massive' ditch. At the end of line 13, and twice in line 15, he is able to continue through a 'transition relevance point', which suggests the other students allow him to continue his turn, although we are not in a position to know if they are actively listening. At the end of line 18, the comma indicates that there is a slightly falling intonation and the floor can be considered to have been relinquished and the story ended. However, there are no following utterances typical of what happens when a story ends. No one comments on the story, asks a question which would allow the telling of further details, or uses it as an occasion for the telling of a second story. There is just silence, which Joel fills by making car noises. It would seem that Joel's story has 'fallen flat'. Telling stories when one is not specifically invited to do so is therefore a risky business, but in this instance, whether the others were listening or not may have been irrelevant for Joel. What was relevant was that he had held the floor uncontested for a period of time and had taken a place, however tenuous, in the group.

Later in the same lesson, another interaction occurred where once again, Joel took turns not directly allocated to him. That is, he was not asked to talk and a comment was not directed to him in a way that required his response. On this occasion, Karl and Aaron had been listing the components of their toys, and had identified pop rivets as one of their components.

Extract 2

162 Aaron Little pop rivets (.) little pop rivets.

163 Karl Yeah pop rivets.

[

164 Joel Little pop rivets are they?

165 Karl Yep.

166 Joel Alright what would you say that this is

167 made out of? (.) Right and it

168 Karl Um what are my components held together with?

[

169 Joel Yes.

170 Karl Glue (.) um brackets (3.4)

171 Hang on what are these things in here?

172 See? Those things in there where you slide it

173 in little holes or something? Or

174 Joel Yeah they're like little slot (clips)

[

175 ? brackets?

176 Karl Yeah slots to

Joel's request for confirmation that they are pop rivets (line 164) is an interactive move that gives him entry into the conversation. A question is part of an 'adjacency pair', and it makes an answer the relevant response. Karl does answer Joel's question ('yep'), which returns the turn to Joel. Joel takes his turn with a turn-entry device ('alright') and uses it to ask another question. This time, however, Karl does not answer and so the expected pattern is breached. It is to such breaches of pattern that an analyst's attention will be drawn, for nothing in conversation is accidental. So when an answer is not given, and instead Karl recites aloud the next question to be answered – 'what are my components held together with', we are warranted in hearing that he has ignored Joel. Yet a turn or two later, when Karl asks a series of questions (line 171-173), Joel readily responds and provides him with answers.

On both of these occasions, Joel had self-selected to take a turn. He was not directly nominated by another speaker nor was he addressed in a manner that would pave his way into the conversation. His turns were designed to gain entry and keep it, either by exciting his peers' interest with a story or by establishing a question and answer sequence in which he could participate. However, neither of these tactics admitted him fully to the conversation. Bourdieu (argued that the ability to produce an utterance that can be understood is not the same thing as producing an utterance that is likely to be '*listened to*, likely to be recognised as *acceptable*' in all situations. On these occasions, Joel's turns seem designed to be listened to but they have not been responded to, which suggests they may not have been received as 'acceptable' or 'allowable' in this situation.

On another occasion in the same lesson, Joel self-selected to speak again and this time his turn was so strategically placed and skilfully designed that he did engage his peers in conversation.

Extract 3

104 Joel Yeah oh: my: my little brother like he-

105 he's got a big mouth he takes after me

106 Karl Who?

107 Joel He has he has.

108 Karl Does he?

109 Joel Yeah. He doesn't take after me in anything else

110 but he's got a big mouth.

111 Aaron Who?

112 Joel My little brother (1.5) not Matthew.Um and (.)

113 he could probably fit one of these into his mouth.

The point Joel eventually makes in this interaction (in line 113) is that his toy had small parts that could easily have been swallowed by someone as small as his little brother. However, this is not what he says when he takes his first turn. Instead, he uses a figure of speech - that his brother has 'a big mouth' and 'takes after' him – to get his peers' attention. Saying someone has 'a big mouth' is a way of saying a person brags, has given away information that should be kept secret, or is in some way 'loudmouthed' and brazen. Joel's statement acts as a hook to catch his listeners, for it suggests there may be a story about to follow. The next utterance, that in having a big mouth his brother 'takes after him', is both self deprecating and self aggrandising, depending on how we hear the categorisation of 'big mouth'. Categorising himself in particular ways was something Joel often resorted to with his peers, especially in whole class contexts where he had a large audience and could generate a lively sequence of teasing and repartee. On such occasions Joel often positioned himself in 'soft rivalry' with his peers, constructing himself as different from them because he was assertive, outgoing and in many ways defiant of authority. While these nuances are not available from this one instance, they are insights I can provide from the many other occasions on which I listened to Joel. In this instance, Joel's utterance gets his friends' attention, although they appear to have heard him more literally than was intended, for even if they do not laugh, they do *answer*. Joel's use of figurative language has engaged his listeners in conversation long enough for him to make his point about the unsafe toy.

On each of these occasions, Joel had been a relatively equal partner in the context of group talk generally, with theoretically unrestricted rights to talk. However, in this immediate context with his peers, he had not been allocated turns by others, so he had *taken* his turns. When one self selects to speak in this manner, particular tactics may be used in order to have those utterances heard and responded to, and we have seen how some of Joel's tactics were more successful than others in this regard.

In the following section, I examine one further occasion in this same lesson when Joel did have restricted rights to talk in conversation, this time with the teacher. On this occasion, he displayed different but successful tactics for being heard at length and being heard in a way that 'counted' as legitimate student talk in that context.

Negotiating turns

Sacks (1995a, p. 256) proposed that people who have restricted rights to talk with each other will often go about beginning to talk in ways that give them the floor. One of the ways they gain the floor is through what he called the 'chaining rule'. That is, if a child says to an adult 'you know what?' the adult will usually reply 'what?' which means the turn reverts to the child and it is now her or his 'right' to answer. Thus a question-answer adjacency pair sequence is turned into a 'chain' consisting of a question, then an answer which is itself a question, so that the person who first spoke is able to speak again because they are now in a position of responding to a question. In that such beginnings allow the first speaker to be re-selected, they function as 'floor seekers'. The person who wanted to speak now has the floor to do so.

In the following example, Joel uses a modified form of the chaining rule to repeat, this time to his teacher, his observation about the safety of his toy for young children.

Extract 4

274 Joel Mr Farrell I'm saying my toy's not good for kids

275 (.) probably under three or four/

276 Teacher Okay. Yeah=

277 Joel Because yeah- my little brother he's only

278 just over twelve month- thirteen months

279 probably he could probably try

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280 and ( ) this

[

281 Teacher A lo- lot of times when you buy toys

282 there is a like an age limit range on=

283 Joel Yeah there is.

284 Teacher ( )

285 Joel Yeah. Not suitable. If there's not suitable

286 ? Yeah Er um

287 Joel Not recommendable for children under (an age limit)

Joel solicits Mr Farrell's attention with a statement that has an upward inflection at the end, a common interrogative intonation. It acts as a floor seeker, with Joel effectively asking permission to continue. The teacher replies encouragingly ('okay') and Joel takes back the floor to continue with his proposition. Being granted the floor by the teacher presents Joel with an opportunity to explain his doubts about the safety of his toy. The teacher pre-empts what he might say, and refers to the age warnings on toys, which Joel responds to by picking up and extending the teacher's discourse, if somewhat inexpertly ('not suitable… not recommendable for children under'). Where in his peer group he had joked about his brother's big mouth, here he begins by saying 'my toy's not good for kids', refining that categorisation with 'under three or four' and then supporting his judgement with the example of his brother. Having the floor 'legitimately' means he does not need to fill his preface with attention seekers. Gee (argues that Discourses come 'complete with a costume' and instructions for how participants should talk if they are to play a particular social role that is recognisable by other participants. Between the first exchange and this one, Joel has changed costume. In the first he was vying for the attention of his peers. In the second he was being a technical design student, rehearsing what might be described as a discourse of the marketplace.

On many occasions in the corpus of data, Joel could be heard calling out to his teacher in this manner. Sometimes it was Mr Farrell and sometimes it was myself, but always it was in a situation where, by inviting the teacher to listen, he engineered permission to speak in the wider forum, so that he had the attention of his peers as well. He negotiated turns in order to have a 'captive audience', literally and metaphorically.

Hearing Joel again

It was at this juncture that I found I could add to the insights generated from the analysis by bringing my own knowledge of Joel into play. I did not do this to change the analysis, but to change how I might *think with* it. From hearing Joel in other situations and knowing him both within and outside of school, I had learned that peer status and group membership were extremely important to him and that his group membership was constructed around his sporting and physical prowess, as well as a degree of defiance and rebellion in his performance of particular 'masculinities'. He had once confided to me that he and his friends were not readily accepted into the mainstream group of students and that they made up a 'community to themselves'. He had said that to be a part of the community one had to be a '_____' and he had named another class member whose family was prominent in the district. In this small rural community, social status was based on length of residency as much as on wealth or occupation and Joel, who was not born in the district but moved in during his primary school years, did not share the sense of belonging that many of the other students had. Acceptance and participation in school and community was for Joel a fragile affair.

This knowledge helped me to think of Joel's tactics in conversation as social and institutional work designed to allow him to negotiate the social order of the classroom in situations where he did not seem to have automatic or easily purchased conversational rights with his peers. It is important to add that I am not arguing that Joel's tactics were conscious or deliberate. They would be better thought of as a 'logic of practice' (built up over time through the repetitive actions, the 'technology', of ordinary conversation. What is important is that these tactics, however they were learned, were representative of the ways in which Joel consistently negotiated his place in the social fabric of the classroom. I began to see how participation in the life of the classroom was for Joel a continuous and highly contested form of social and institutional work, conducted in the everyday and local activity of classroom talk.

Conclusion

Teacher research is promoted as a form of reflective practice where teachers can learn 'in front' of their students, and discover 'a different way of looking at teaching' (Mohr 1996, p. 118). In this study, I used particular theoretical and analytic perspectives to learn *away from* my students and to find a different way of hearing them. In so doing, I came to understand the practical circumstances of their lives in the classroom in a manner I had not previously been able to do.

In this paper I have focused on one student in order to show what may be gained from the close examination of talk between peers, and the further insights generated when that talk is compared with student-teacher talk and with what a situated researcher may have heard on other occasions. I have used Joel's talk as an example of the social and institutional work that may be accomplished in and through classroom talk. For Joel, talk was not only a resource for doing the work of being a student but also a resource for negotiating membership in his local

social group and in the class as a whole. In the study, hearing each of the students in this way enabled me, as a teacher researcher, to position myself both inside and outside the classroom and to appreciate the way adolescent students work continuously and creatively to assemble ways of being students alongside other social and sub-cultural ways of being.

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